

## MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

NO. I.—THE SLOW LORIS (*NYCTICEBUS COUCANG*).

(With a photo.)



Above is a photo of a Slow Loris sent to us by Capt. J. H. Green, 10/20th. Burma Rifles, caught in the Mountains above Mong Si, during a trip through the Kachin Hills, "North Hsenwi" Northern Shan States. Captain Green writes:—

"Whatever it may be there is no doubt that it is very very scarce in the Kachin Hills of Myitkyina, Bhamo, and North Hsenwi. The Kachins, who are wild hillmen living with nature, have generally speaking seen everything there is to be seen in their native jungles. The majority of the old men told me they had never seen one before, a few however said they had seen one once, but they did not agree as some said the last one they saw was black. After consultation they decided that it was a 'sangang' and that the 'sharu', a large type of mole, comes out of the ground, turns into this animal and lives up trees. They pointed out that the little finger nail of the hind paw was still very long and had not yet completely changed. They also stated that it lives without food or drink, runs away only when the wind blows, and dies if struck only once, but revives if the blows are repeated. I disallusioned them about the food and drink as it was quite willing to drink and eat plantains and cooked rice. It unfortunately escaped after 3 days."

The Slow Loris (*N. coucang*) is found throughout the countries east of the Bay of Bengal occurring in Assam, Burmah, the Malay Peninsula, Siam and Cochin China, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and the Phillipines. It is a species of Lemur. Lemurs have a most remarkable distribution. There are about 50 species known out of which 36 are confined to Madagascar and its neighbouring islands, the rest occur in the Ethiopian and Oriental region. The Lorises are classed

in a sub-division of the family *Lemuridae* known as the *Lorisinae*, the species contained in this sub-family are separated in two genera, the Slow Loris (*Nycticebus*) and the Slender Lorises (*Loris*.) A characteristic feature in the structure of the second toe is that the second toe is furnished with a sharp claw, unlike the flattened nails of the other fingers and toes.

We have had both Slow Loris and Slender Lorises in captivity in the Society's rooms from time to time. The little animals make extremely engaging pets. The Slender Loris from its emaciated appearance is perhaps less attractive but the Slow Loris is much sturdier in build and a much pleasanter looking fellow. It is impossible to describe the utter solemnity of its expression or the slow deliberation of its movements. You might liken its gait to that of a chameleon. Obviously it is a creature of nocturnal habits which possibly explains why it is so rarely seen. Our Loris used to spend his day curled up in a tight ball with his head bent low between his thighs and encircled by his arms; usually he retired into the depths of his box but quite often he would be content to settle down on top of it. He could always be aroused from his torpor by the offer of a grasshopper—slowly he would uncurl himself and stare at you with his round brown eyes in a rather bewildered manner. Hunting grasshoppers was a mania with him—he would climb down from his perch, always holding the branch with both hands and never quitting his hold with his legs unless he was sure of his hand grip, he would then stalk his victim, with much deliberation and when, within the reach of it, would rise almost erect and balance himself awkwardly with both arms outstretched and literally throw himself forward and clutch at the insect with both his hands. Mostly his methods were successful but quite often he landed not on the insect but on the spot which it had just vacated. He was a clean animal and spent a good bit of his time cleaning and licking his fur. Our Loris hated wetting and soiling his hands. On one occasion when a grasshopper he was stalking hopped into his saucer of tea—I might say our Loris loved his 5 o'clock—the situation greatly troubled him. He wanted the grasshopper but getting it implied wetting his hands, finally his greed overcame his obsession and he took the plunge—the resulting splash intensely disgusted him and he retired to his perch and spent a great deal of time cleaning himself and scrubbing his wet hands on his furry thighs exactly as a little boy would do on his trousers. He permitted handling, but one could not be certain of his temper—above all things he loved his head and back scratched and would turn this way and that so as to allow you to perform the business thoroughly.

Blanford gives a variety of names applied by natives to this animal in different parts of the country. In Bengal it is called *Lajja banar* or Bashful Ape, in Hindi *Sharmini Bili* (Bashful Cat), in Burmese *Myouk-Moung-Ma* (Monkey's concubine). Strange and curious superstitions are connected with this animal alive or dead. Mr. Stanley S. Flower in the P.Z.S. 1900 writes:—

“There is hardly an event in the life of a man, woman or child or even domestic animal that may not be influenced by the Slow Loris or by any separate part of it. The Malay who runs amok or commits an unpremeditated crime may attribute his behaviour to the baleful influence of a particular part of the Slow Loris that an enemy has buried, unknown to him, under his threshold. A sailing ship with a Slow Loris on its prow need never fear of being becalmed. Possibly from its habit of sleeping with its head buried under its arms it has been deduced that ‘the life of the Slow Loris is unhappy as it is continually seeing ghosts, that is why it hides its face with its hands.’ The fur of the animal is used for curing wounds and in South India the eyes of the Slender Loris, according to Jerdon, are greatly esteemed by the Tamils as a remedy for certain eye diseases. The large beautiful brown eyes of the Loris have also attracted the Singalese who believe that from them it is possible to concoct a powerful charm and love potion. There are three species of Slender Loris

found in South India and Ceylon. In habit they are similar to the Slow Loris but in limb and general build they are very much more slender. The Tamil name is *Thavangu* or thin-bodied, hence according to more Jerdon deformed children or lean persons are referred to by the Tamils with the same epithet."

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## NO. II.—A PANTHER SHOOT BEYOND CHAKRATA.

The Account of a Panther Shoot at Simla in the Journal of the 31st December 1923 reminds me of another Panther incident that happened about two years ago; two marches out of Chakrata at a place called Ringali.

We were held up here owing to a landslip in the road further on; and amused ourselves with what game there was about. Ghorai mostly and pheasants plus a 10½ inch Serow. One evening the Shikari came in and reported that a Panther had killed a bullock. I went down into the Nulla and sat over the kill but the Panther did not return; some days later at 11 a.m. he killed another bullock and pulled him down the Khud side for about 50 yards. I was out at the time and when I got back I found that my friend, who was on his first shikar trip and had never shot anything big, had a *machan* erected over the kill so I went down and sat with him. We were not 15 minutes in position when the panther returned and was missed by my friend whom I will call A. This was at 12 noon; it was a case of Buck fever. No more was heard of the panther until the evening of September 17th. A was then sitting in a *machan* erected on a big tree over a live goat. About 6-30 p.m. a slight noise on the right attracted his attention and on looking he saw, indistinctly, a panther lying in the scrub watching the goat. As he waited, a barking deer walked into the open from the opposite side and towards the goat; this was too much for the panther who charged straight at the barking deer who made off, pursued by his enemy, down the *Khud* side. I looked for a kill next day but could not find any, so the barking deer must have escaped.

As A had never shot a panther he went into the *machan* every evening for a week but the brute, being an old and very wily one, would not go near a tree likely to hold a Shikari. The next thing that happened was that the Jamadar's cow was seized and, but that the owner was on the spot, she would have gone the same way as the rest. She had a nasty gash on her throat when I saw her. It was now high time something was done as the brute became the terror of the place, so I arranged to have the goat tied up in an open clearing right away from trees, with only two thick bushes on the top side of it. One of these bushes I had hollowed out and cut brushwood was stuck into the open spaces, leaving a hole to creep in by and shoot through. At 3 p.m. I crept into the bush, the goat about 15 yards below me. I was there about half an hour when it came on to rain and, when in the act of putting on a waterproof, out of the bush on my right, 10 yards away, sprang a magnificent panther and in three wonderful bounds he landed on the goat; as he seized her he was exactly facing me and, owing to the formation of the ground, all I could see was his bullet head and back. So I let drive a charge of buck-shot (it was all I had) right between his eyes. On receiving this he reared straight up receiving the contents of the left barrel behind the shoulder, which knocked him over, but notwithstanding all this punishment he got up and disappeared over the *Khud* side. Getting out of the bush I followed up, finding blood tracks right away. The *Khud* side was very steep and covered with scrub which one had to hang on to at times, the situation was anything but pleasant, as a matter of fact it was decidedly ugly. After going down